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Conservation Insider Bulletin: [Executive Watch: Cooper Adds Executive Order on Energy Bill](#)

Ending weeks of suspense, Gov. Roy Cooper signed legislation last week designed to boost solar energy development in North Carolina, but also contained a controversial 18-month moratorium on new wind energy projects. At the same time, Cooper issued an executive order intended to keep wind project reviews moving during that period.

“A [strong renewable energy industry is good for our environment and our economy](#),” Cooper said. “This bill is critical for the future of significant increases in our already booming solar industry. I **strongly oppose the ugly, last-minute, politically motivated wind moratorium**. However, this fragile and hard fought solar deal will be lost if I veto this legislation and that veto is sustained.”

The General Assembly a few weeks ago approved a compromise bill — House Bill 589 — that was developed through a negotiation primarily among key legislators, Duke Energy, and solar energy producers. While the bill as negotiated had weaknesses as well as strengths, it had the overall advantage of signaling the state’s intention to move forward with development of solar energy projects statewide (and continuing some of the tax and regulatory tools important to doing so). Unfortunately, a handful of irresponsible Senate leaders succeeded in imposing an unrelated and destructive 18-month moratorium on new wind energy projects as part of the final bill.

After the bill passed both legislative Chambers, Cooper used most of his allowed 30-day time window to consider how to handle the bill. He had supported the original compromise but opposed the wind moratorium. Ultimately, he decided that the need to continue progress on solar development trumped the problems created by the temporary wind moratorium. However, in an attempt to mitigate those problems, [he simultaneously signed a new executive order for his state agencies](#), intended to keep the review of new wind energy projects moving forward administratively even during the period of moratorium on granting final project approvals.

[Cooper’s order specifically directs](#) the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, the Coastal Resources Commission, and other executive agencies to do their best to expedite pre-application review and processing of new wind energy project proposals, and to support the recruitment of more wind energy development to North Carolina.

NCLCV has previously noted the pros and cons of HB 589 as originally negotiated, and vigorously opposed the addition of an unneeded and destructive moratorium on wind energy projects. However, we commend the governor for the intent of his executive order. **Despite the worst efforts of some legislators, Cooper continues to demonstrate his commitment to investing in a diverse array of clean energy alternatives.**